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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/551,672	09/30/2005	Hiroimi Matsumura	278224US3X PCT	5573
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OBLON, SPIVAK, MCCLELLAND MAIER & NEUSTADT, P.C. 1940 DUKE STREET ALEXANDRIA, VA 22314				
EXAMINER				
FOGARTY, CAITLIN ANNE				
ART UNIT		PAPER NUMBER		
1793				
NOTIFICATION DATE		DELIVERY MODE		
10/15/2008		ELECTRONIC		

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Notice of the Office communication was sent electronically on above-indicated "Notification Date" to the following e-mail address(es):

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Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/551,672

Applicant(s)

MATSUMURA ET AL.

Examiner

CAITLIN FOGARTY

Art Unit

1793

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 03 October 2008.
2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-6 and 12-17 is/are pending in the application.
4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-6 and 12-17 is/are rejected.
7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 13 June 2005 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/S508)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on October 3, 2008 has been entered.

Status of Claims

2. Claims 1 – 6 and 12 – 17 are pending where claims 1 – 4 have been amended. Claims 7 – 11 and 18 – 20 have been cancelled.

Status of Previous Rejections

3. The 35 U.S.C. 112 second paragraph rejection of claims 1 – 4 as being indefinite has been withdrawn in view of the amendment filed August 29, 2008.

The 35 U.S.C. 103 (a) rejection of claims 1-6 and 12-17 as being unpatentable over Takarasawa et al. (JP 11-061393 cited in the IDS) in view of Rhodes et al. ("Effects of Friction Stir Welding on Microstructure of 7075 Aluminum" cited in the IDS) has been withdrawn in view of the amendment filed August 29, 2008.

Priority

4. Receipt is acknowledged of papers submitted under 35 U.S.C. 119(a)-(d), which papers have been placed of record in the file.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

5. The text of those sections of Title 35, U.S. Code not included in this action can be found in a prior Office action.
6. Claims 1 – 6 and 12 – 17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the "Effects of Friction Stir Welding on Microstructure of 7075 Aluminum" by Rhodes et al. (cited in the IDS) in view of "Corrosion-fatigue crack growth in friction stir welded Al 7050" by Pao et al.

With respect to instant claims 1 and 5, p. 70 of Rhodes discloses an aluminum alloy prepared by the butt joining, through friction stir welding, of aluminum sheets. Also, p. 73 of Rhodes teaches that the weld nugget (joined portion) has an average particle diameter of 60-80 nm and that the average particle diameter of the intermetallic compound in the parent metal (non-joined portion) is 50-75 nm. Therefore, the average particle diameter of the intermetallic compound in the weld nugget is within the range of 60% to 130% of the average particle diameter of the intermetallic compound in the parent metal. The joined portion of the aluminum alloy of Rhodes is produced by friction stir welding.

In regards to instant claims 2 and 12, p. 70 of Rhodes discloses an aluminum alloy prepared by the butt joining, through friction stir welding, of aluminum sheets. Also, p. 73 of Rhodes discloses that the weld nugget contains a high density of randomly oriented intragranular precipitates. This suggest that the density of precipitates increased and consequently the average distance between adjacent

intermetallic compound particles decreased from that of the parent metal which is within the range recited in instant claim 2.

Regarding instant claims 3 and 13, p. 70 of Rhodes discloses an aluminum alloy prepared by the butt joining, through friction stir welding, of aluminum sheets. Also, p. 73 and 74 of Rhodes teach that the weld nugget has a recrystallized, fine equiaxed grain structure on the order of 2-4 μm in diameter and that the grains of the parent metal were elongated grains. Therefore, the grains in the weld nugget have smaller diameters than those of the parent metal which is within the range disclosed in instant claim 3.

With respect to instant claims 4 and 14, p. 70 of Rhodes discloses an aluminum alloy prepared by the butt joining, through friction stir welding, of aluminum sheets. Also, p. 69 of Rhodes teaches that the friction stir welded joint does not have the dendritic structure typical of a fusion-weld joint.

Rhodes differs from instant claims 1 – 4 because it does not teach that the aluminum alloy prepared by the butt joining of metal sheets is a sputtering target. However, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art that the aluminum alloy of Rhodes may be used as a sputtering target since it is in sheet form and aluminum is a common sputtering target material. Rhodes also differs from instant claims 1 – 4 because it does not teach that the joined portion has a structure characteristic of the recrystallization of the material of the joined portion by annealing and substantially without a crystal orientation characteristic of plastic flow due to friction stir welding. However, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to anneal the joined portion after friction stir welding in order to re-precipitate the fine

strengthening phase and restore the strength in the weld region as evidenced by p. 607 of Pao which also teaches an aluminum alloy prepared by butt joining, through friction stir welding, of aluminum plates on p. 605 and 606. Therefore, the joined portion of the aluminum alloy of Rhodes in view of Pao would have a recrystallized structure characteristic of annealing and substantially without a crystal orientation characteristic of plastic flow due to friction stir welding.

Rhodes differs from instant claims 6 and 15 – 17 because it does not teach that the target has a planar area of 1 m² or more. However, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to make the sputtering target as large as necessary using butt joining of metal sheets through friction stir welding in order to obtain the desired size of the target where the properties of the joined portion are very similar to the properties of the non-joined portion. See MPEP 2144.04 IV A.

Response to Arguments

7. Applicant's arguments filed August 29, 2008 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

Applicant argued that Rhodes teaches recrystallization due to FSW, but does not teach that the joined portion has a structure characteristic of the recrystallization of the material of the joined portion by annealing and substantially without a crystal orientation characteristic of plastic flow due to friction stir welding. The examiner's response to this argument is addressed in the 35 U.S.C. 103(a) rejection with a new secondary reference above.

Conclusion

8. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to CAITLIN FOGARTY whose telephone number is (571)270-3589. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday - Friday 8:00 AM - 5:30 PM EST.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Roy King can be reached on (571) 272-1244. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Roy King/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art
Unit 1793

CF